

WORLD Refugee Day



Iraq Causes of the Refugee Problem



There are currently 229,000 Iraqi refugees registered with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Turkey, and Iran. UNHCR estimates that approximately 1.5 million Iraqis displaced by sectarian violence following the Samarra Mosque bombing of February 2006 remain internally displaced inside Iraq. There are approximately 227,000 Iraqi refugees currently registered with UNHCR in neighboring countries, however there is no definitive number of Iraqi refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) because they are often not registered and are disbursed in urban centers. UNHCR reports that 1.5 million Iraqis that were displaced by sectarian violence following the Samarra Mosque bombing of February 2006 remain internally displaced in Iraq. Through the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), the U.S. government supports Iraqi refugee assistance programs in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Turkey, and Iran, as well as programs for the internally displaced inside Iraq through both international organizations (IOs) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

Need for Resettlement

In 2008, the Government's adoption of a national policy on displacement and the issuance of two presidential decrees laid the foundations for the return and reintegration of displaced people. The laws are in the process of being fully implemented. Returnees in Iraq encounter, among other things, a lack of physical security, a dearth of livelihood opportunities and difficulties in availing themselves of social services. If returnees are not helped to re-establish themselves in their places of origin, tensions could flare up between them and local people. For their part, many IDPs live in dire conditions and do not have access to assistance. As their displacement is prolonged, their need for humanitarian assistance increases. Since 2003, many refugees have been targeted in violent attacks. Although the direct threat has subsided, they remain vulnerable and require protection and basic assistance for their survival.

Quick Facts

Number of Iraqi Refugees resettled in the United States as of 2009: 31,670
Number of displaced Iraqis as of 2007: 2.6 million
Number of Iraqis registered as refugees with the UNHCR: 1.9 million